



WILL I HAVE A HEALTHY BABY?

Genetic Counseling

If you are pregnant or thinking about having a child, you may have questions about birth defects or other health problems.

Anyone can have a child with a birth defect or genetic disorder.

Some reasons are:

- Medical problems that run in families
- Genetic disorders which are more common in certain ethnic and racial groups, for example:
 - Northern European Whites — *cystic fibrosis*
 - Greeks, Italians, and Southeast Asians — *thalassemia*
 - African Americans — *sickle cell anemia*
 - Ashkenazi Jews — *Tay-Sachs disease*
- Drugs, alcohol or medicines used during pregnancy

The cause of many birth defects is unknown.

Genetic counseling can help you:

- Better understand your chances of giving birth to a child with a birth defect or genetic disorder
- Answer questions and discuss medical concerns about your “family tree”
- Understand your choices for finding and treating birth defects or health problems in your baby
- Get accurate, up-to-date information about genetic disorders, birth defects and available testing
- Plan for the care of a child born with a birth defect or other health problems

The genetic counselor will respect your feelings and beliefs.

Genetic counseling may be most helpful if:

- You are a woman over 34 and are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- You are pregnant and tests show the baby may have a problem
- You have a family history of genetic disorders or birth defects, for example:
Down syndrome, a bleeding disorder, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, or muscular dystrophy
- You are worried that your medical condition may be passed on to your child
- You have had three or more miscarriages or cannot get pregnant
- You and your partner are first cousins or closely related
- You have used alcohol or drugs during your pregnancy
- You are taking medicines for a health condition and are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- You are concerned about being exposed to radiation or chemicals

Genetic counseling is available to all who want it.

Each clinic sets its own fees, but can help you if you cannot afford the counseling session. After the counseling, a review of what was discussed can be sent to you, your doctor or midwife, or other family members at your request.

In the Pacific Northwest there are clinics for genetic counseling in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

*Anyone can call for more information or to make an appointment.
To find the clinic nearest to you call:*

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Alaska | 907-269-3430 |
| Idaho | 208-334-2235 x261 |
| Oregon | 800-SAFE NET (800-723-3638) |
| Washington | 253-395-6741 |

This fact sheet is available from:



Pacific Northwest
Regional Genetics Group

<http://mchneighborhood.ichp.edu/pacnorgg>

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